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# KIERKEGAARD ON RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY: THE PROBLEM OF THE CRITERION

C. Stephen Evans

This paper explores the important role authority plays in the religious thought of Søren Kierkegaard. In contrast to dominant modes of thought in both modern and postmodern philosophy, Kierkegaard considers the religious authority inherent in a special revelation from God to be the fundamental source of religious truth. The question as to how a genuine religious authority can be recognized is particularly difficult for Kierkegaard, since rational evaluation of authorities could be seen as a rejection of that authority in favor of the authority of reason. However, I argue that Kierkegaard does offer criteria for recognizing a genuine religious authority. I explore these criteria and try to show they are helpful, but I argue that there is no principled reason he should not accept other criteria he rejects, such as the criterion of miracles. In conclusion, I suggest that both the criteria offered by Kierkegaard and the method by which they are derived require us to question certain Enlightenment views as to what should count as "rational."

Claims to religious authority are rightly regarded with suspicion in the contemporary world. The tragedy of Heaven's Gate, in which forty-one people committed to the authority of Marshall Applewhite committed suicide, clearly shows the dangers of uncritically accepting a religious authority. Such a tragedy raises pressing questions about whether it is possible to distinguish legitimate and illegitimate forms of religious authority, and if it is possible, how to make the distinction. In this paper I shall examine some of the roles the concept of authority plays in Kierkegaard's writings. I shall try to show that while Kierkegaard is well aware of the dangers posed by religious authority, he is committed to the claim that Christian faith is irreducibly tied to claims to authority. I shall also look at some of the criteria he suggests for distinguishing genuine from illegitimate claims to authority, and try to assess the adequacy of those criteria in light of the contemporary situation.

Kierkegaard attempts to draw a sharp distinction between beliefs and actions grounded in an authoritative revelation and those based on reason. However, this sharp distinction is undermined by his own attempt to show that an acceptance of authority is not arbitrary. Specifically, Kierkegaard, in writing about the case of a Danish pastor deposed for claiming to have had a special revelation, offers criteria for recognizing a genuine revelation. Though these criteria are negative in character and certainly offer no proof that a revelation is genuine and therefore deserving of recognition as an



authority, I argue that they are rational criteria and are in fact quite similar to traditional criteria offered by such thinkers as Thomas Aquinas. Once this is realized, there is no principled reason why Kierkegaard should not employ other rational criteria in differentiating a genuine revelation from spurious ones. Therefore, the crucial role played by authority in Kierkegaard's thought does not commit him to any form of irrationalism.

In conclusion, however, I argue that the rational criteria Kierkegaard offers require us to rethink what is meant by "reason" in this context. On a classical foundationalist conception of reason, criteria for revelation should be developed antecedently to and independently of any recognition of any commitment to a particular revelation, so as to serve as a foundational justification for such a commitment. Kierkegaard's criteria do not meet this requirement, and must be viewed as criteria that are in part developed with the help of reflection on commitments already made to a revelation viewed as authoritative. Such a stance, though it fails to satisfy the rationalistic aspirations of classical foundationalism, is not irrationalist, however, since one can argue, following Roderick Chisholm, that it is consistent with the way epistemological criteria are developed in other areas of human concern.

### *I. Postmodernism, Modernity, and Appeals to Authority*

Many would allege that a quest for a distinction between genuine and illegitimate religious authority is a huge mistake, for such a quest seems to assume that authority can be legitimate. Such critics would allege that the concept of authority is irredeemable; what is needed is not a criterion for distinguishing justified from unjustified authority but the rejection of authority altogether.

One might think that this kind of rejection of authority is the trademark of Enlightenment thinking, and that a postmodern age might be more open to authority than the Enlightenment, with its prejudice against prejudices, to recall Gadamer's indictment of modern philosophy. Perhaps this should be so, but in reality here postmodernism shows itself to be a true child of modernity. At least for many postmodern thinkers, the heart of the movement lies in its refusal to accept the idea that there are privileged points of view.

I shall take John Caputo as a representative postmodern thinker here and Caputo puts it this way: "No form of *Wahrheit* has any rights or privileges over any other. We lack the standpoint and the right to make such a judgment."<sup>1</sup> Since one might reasonably think that the very essence of authority lies in a privileging of some standpoint, this seems to imply that authority must be rejected altogether.

Caputo does express the postmodern suspicion of Enlightenment claims to know the Truth, or disclose the meaning of Being. But it is worth noting that the Enlightenment quest for a rational foundation for human life had its origins in a fear of the violence and intolerance sparked by the religious wars of the post-reformation era, with the contending parties each claiming to possess an absolute authority. The Enlightenment saw reason as a basis for tolerance, a way to eliminate oppression and terror.

If postmodernists have come to see that intolerance and oppression can

masquerade under the label of reason, it does not mean that they are inherently friendly to the claims of authority reason was supposed to subvert. Rather, it wishes to advance the cause of tolerance and liberation the Enlightenment embraced by rejecting the whole notion of a final truth or "metanarrative." It does so on the grounds that such final truths do not in fact represent the outcome of a timeless, objective truth-seeking faculty, but represent an attempt by yet another particular perspective to tyrannize over its rivals and disguise its tyranny in the process. Nor is this seen as a purely abstract debate; the problem is fundamentally that "blood is usually shed in the name of Being, God, or truth. . ."<sup>2</sup>

Caputo appeals to Kierkegaard as a philosopher who has come to live with what he calls "the flux." It is a little hard to decide exactly what the flux amounts to, but perhaps the difficulty is appropriate, since the flux is linked to "undecidability." Whatever this is, it is vital to what Caputo calls "chastened, postmetaphysical faith."<sup>3</sup> Without the flux, "faith becomes a dangerous dogmatism."<sup>4</sup> He is particularly critical of a religious view that thinks "in terms of a gift of grace given only to a chosen people." In such a case "religion begins to degenerate into a factional power and a force of oppression."<sup>5</sup> It looks as if Caputo would regard any claim that God has been revealed in a particular way to a particular people as inherently dogmatic and oppressive. Yet it is precisely such a particularist claim that distinguishes appeals to religious authority from Enlightenment appeals to universal reason. Hence, whether we look at the issue from modernity's rationalistic perspective or the suspicious perspective of postmodernism, religious authority appears to be a dubious place to stand. However, Kierkegaard wants to claim that *the* problem of his time, the crucial "calamity of the age," is "not doubt about the truth of the religious but insubordination to the authority of the religious."<sup>6</sup>

## II. *The Centrality of Religious Authority for Kierkegaard*

I shall not attempt here to argue at any length for the centrality of the concept of religious authority for Kierkegaard. Though the concept may not receive a great deal of overt attention in the pseudonymous works, it is clearly a dominant underlying theme, insofar as the concept of authority is linked to the notion of divine revelation. The problem of authority lies behind Abraham's difficulties in *Fear and Trembling*, since implicit in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac is his conviction that God has called him to do this and authorized him to do this. Abraham's inability to justify or explain his actions is linked to the way the action is rooted in God's revelation to him, a revelation that cannot be justified or explained by appeal to rational criteria.

The concept of authority is also present in a suppressed manner in *Philosophical Fragments*, where the ironical thought-experiment sees the disciple of the God who has appeared in time as owing everything to the God. Such a disciple must be seen as one who accepts the authority of the God-in-time. Faith is a passion in which reason can accept its own inability to understand the Absolute Paradox, but nevertheless makes that Paradox the basis for the whole of life. The authority of reason is teleologically suspended for the person of faith by the higher authority of the presence of the God-in-time.

The concept of authority is more overtly central to *The Concept of Anxiety* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (especially with respect to "religiousness B"), and surprisingly prominent in *Works of Love*, as well as the stridently Christian writings of Anti-Climacus. That some earlier commentators on Kierkegaard failed to see the fundamental importance of the concept for him testifies eloquently to the baneful influence twentieth century existentialism had on Kierkegaard interpretation back in the days when he was viewed primarily as the "father" of that movement.<sup>7</sup> Some of this misinterpretation is doubtless motivated by misguided charity; thinkers who admire Kierkegaard and consider the notion of religious authority to be indefensible have great difficulty in believing Kierkegaard can be committed to the concept.

Yet it is easy to see that religious authority is not for Kierkegaard in tension with fear and trembling but one of its constituents. Kierkegaard never takes seriously the kind of radical Sartrean autonomy in which the self creates itself. From his viewpoint, the self is always grounded on a "criterion" that is higher than the self.<sup>8</sup> Our ideal selves cannot be created from nothing; meaning and truth cannot be generated *ex nihilo*. The possibility of "the individual" who is not completely a product of the social system, the individual who does not worship the state as the highest expression of society, depends upon the individual's finding a source of meaning that is for the individual higher than that which grounds the social system. Insofar as "reason" is simply the concrete expression of the patterns of thinking that form the basis of that same social system, such an individual is necessarily committed to an "authority" that he or she will not be able to justify to society at large.

### III. *The Dangers of Subjectivism*

Despite, or perhaps because of, the centrality of the related concepts of authority and revelation, Kierkegaard is keenly conscious of the dangers of authority. In fact, it is fair to say that Kierkegaard is every bit as aware of the dangers of uncontrolled subjective commitments as are the Enlightenment defenders of reason. In so early a work as *Fear and Trembling* the pseudonym Johannes de Silentio explicitly raises the question as to whether or not the hearer of a sermon on Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac might in a delusion go home and want to sacrifice his own children. Silentio worries about whether he dares "to speak unreservedly about Abraham without running the risk that some individual will become unbalanced and do the same thing."<sup>9</sup> The appalling thing about the Abraham story is precisely the fact that there appears to be no sure rational criteria for distinguishing Abraham from a murderer.

Given the dangers, why does Silentio go on to speak about Abraham? The answer, I believe, is that Abraham's story exemplifies a possibility that is crucial for genuinely human existence. To talk about Abraham is to talk about what cannot be justified by appeal to the rational discourse of the existing order, but if we cannot talk about Abraham, then we have in effect deified that existing order of things. If the established order is in effect deified then the possibility of a radical critique of the existing order is preclud-

ed. Also precluded is the possibility that a human being can fulfill his or her humanness in ways that the existing order does not sanction. If that existing order is in some ways destructive of genuine human life, then the danger of ignoring Abraham is even greater than the danger of speaking about him. Abraham is important because "it is one thing to be admired and another to become a guiding star that saves the anguished."<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Johannes Climacus acknowledges the dangers of what he calls "the subjective type of madness." In the course of his defense of "truth as subjectivity" he recognizes how difficult it is to distinguish such truth from insanity. "In a solely subjective definition of truth, lunacy and truth are ultimately indistinguishable, because they both may have inwardness."<sup>11</sup> Climacus does not minimize the danger that this close resemblance creates. In fact, he acknowledges that this danger lies behind the appeal of Enlightenment objectivity, which promises protection against subjectivity.

The Enlightenment fear of "enthusiasm" might appear to be quite different from this Kierkegaardian fear of madness. However, in both cases we have what might be called "uncontrolled subjectivity." Kierkegaard considers the case of madness simply because it is an extreme kind of uncontrolled subjectivity. One might here consider the fact that in extreme cases of subjectivity gone awry, such as Heaven's Gate or the mass suicide of Jim Jones's followers, there is a strong tendency for outsiders to say that such uncontrolled "enthusiasm" is a form of insanity. One might say that Kierkegaard wishes to look at the worst-case scenario for subjectivity. The challenge to the proponent of subjectivity goes something like this: Once you have allowed subjectivity to escape the control of reason, what is to block it from the kinds of excesses indistinguishable from madness?

Kierkegaard's reply to this argument is essentially to claim that there is no way to avoid the danger of madness. If one eliminates subjectivity, one may well avoid the possibility of one type of madness but foster the possibility of what he terms the "objective" kind of madness, in which subjectivity or inwardness is eliminated and genuine human life is simply abolished. A completely objective human being would be a kind of machine: an "artificial product" with "glass eyes" and "hair made from a floor mat." The purely objective person is imagined as a kind of robot, a "walking stick" with a mechanical contrivance inside to produce speech.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, in both *Fear and Trembling* and *Postscript* there is actually a link between subjectivity and authority. Contrary to critics who see the two as opposed, the subjective individual is someone who has a foundation for the self that cannot be justified by appeal to the criteria embedded in the practices and discourse of the social establishment. Hence, the subjective individual is someone who is grounded in and at least implicitly appeals to a higher authority that provides that foundation. The dangers of such an appeal to authority are fully acknowledged, but the argument is that the dangers created by eliminating such appeals are even greater.

There is a parallel between this argument and one that employs the language of American political discourse. Freedom of speech and religion give rise to movements like Heaven's Gate, and the dangers of such fanaticism are obvious. However, the restrictions on freedom of speech and reli-

gion that would be required to eliminate such movements would harm society even more by squelching any movement that poses radically new ideas and challenges.

However, even if this Kierkegaardian argument is sound, it does not follow that complacency with respect to the dangers of appeals to authority is justified. Kierkegaard clearly believes that no sure-fire method of rational evaluation can be used to screen candidates for religious authority, if by "rational evaluation" we mean a process that appeals only to generally accepted norms and practices. For such a method of evaluation will necessarily rule against any truly radical challenge to those norms and practices. However, though we may not have an algorithmic method to distinguish what we might call authentic religious authorities from lunatics, it does not follow from this that decisions about authority are made blindly. Once the impossibility of any definitive rational justification of an authority is admitted, it is tempting to go the "existentialist" route and regard commitment to an authority as a kind of personal "radical choice," made without reasons. However, Kierkegaard himself does not view matters that way.

As he sees it, an individual who trusts an authority necessarily does so in "fear and trembling" because of the lack of objective rational justification. However, the fear and trembling also implies that the choice must be one that is made with great care. The underlying assumption is that both the person who makes a claim to be an authority and the person who trusts an alleged authority can be deluded. One can be right or wrong about such things. It is this possibility that produces the anxiety on the part of the individual dealing with authority. But that anxiety also means the choice should be made with care. The lack of any algorithmic justification does not mean that there are no criteria to help a person decide whether a claim to authority is justified. In his writings Kierkegaard himself, even though he claims that there is no objective proof for the validity of a revelation, presents a number of criteria that he thinks will help the individual decide when authority is genuine. In the next section I shall try to examine a number of these criteria and also ask some questions about their adequacy.

#### *IV. Criteria for Genuine Authority*

The criteria suggested in Kierkegaard's writings for distinguishing a genuine revelation seem to be mainly negative in character. That is, there are certain characteristics that, when present, will disqualify an alleged revelation. Such characteristics always, however, fall short of positive proof that a candidate is a genuine revelation. One can at most say that a revelation-claimant that passes these tests is still a live candidate. We will examine several of these negative criteria, looking at various works in Kierkegaard's authorship. There are of course significant differences between the person who must decide whether or not he or she has been given a revelation and thus possesses religious authority and the person who must decide whether or not to believe someone else who claims such authority. However, in both cases the essential factor is a decision as to whether or not a revelation has really been given and whether or not authority is therefore really present. In my discussion I shall range freely

over such concepts as “the knight of faith” from *Fear and Trembling* and “the apostle” and the “extraordinary” from *The Book on Adler*, since in all these cases something like an authorizing revelation that cannot be rationally justified is present.

The most important of Kierkegaard’s works on this topic is of course *The Book on Adler*. This work was inspired by the case of Danish pastor, Adolph Adler, who was deposed by the Church because he claimed to have received a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. Kierkegaard was fascinated by the case because of what he thought it revealed about “the modern age,” and he produced no fewer than three different versions of a book on religious authority that focuses on Adler. Kierkegaard never published the work as a whole, chiefly because of concerns about its effect on Adler as a human being, though parts of it, mainly the essay “The Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle,” were included in other works.<sup>13</sup>

### 1. *Reliance on Authority: Rejection of the Philosophical and the Aesthetic.*

The first criterion presented, one fundamental to Kierkegaard, is that the individual who is entrusted with a revelation must appeal to the revelation itself as the ground of his or her message. In *The Book on Adler* Kierkegaard argues that Adler flunks this test in his later writings by presenting himself in the guise of a genius. However much or little genius is shown by Adler’s writings is beside the point, however, since Adler had earlier claimed to have received a revelation from God, and such a claim to authority is qualitatively distinct from any claim to genius. Thus, if someone propounds a doctrine and argues that it is philosophically so profound or aesthetically so beautiful that it must be something revealed by God, then the person making the claim is fundamentally confused: “the one called by a revelation, to whom a doctrine is entrusted, argues on the basis that it is a revelation, on the basis that he has authority. I am not obliged to listen to Paul because he is brilliant or matchlessly brilliant, but I must submit to Paul because he has divine authority.”<sup>14</sup>

Kierkegaard’s point here rests on the traditional claim that the person of faith believes what God reveals because God reveals it.<sup>15</sup> If I believe what God reveals only because I have myself independently determined that the content of the revelation is true, then my belief is not grounded in trust in God and does not count as an expression of faith in God. Hence the bearer of a revelation ought to ask for belief on the grounds of the revelation itself; to ask for belief on philosophical or aesthetical grounds is not to ask for faith at all.

However sensible this appears, there is a difficulty. Essentially, the criterion does not determine whether or not a revelation claim is genuine, but only whether the bearer of the revelation claim is clear about the nature of a revelation. In other words, it seems possible for God to grant a revelation to someone such as Adler who might be confused about the nature of a revelation. In that case there would be a genuine revelation, and what might be called objective authority, but the confused individual would present the revelation in such a form that it would fail the criterion Kierkegaard presents.



Nevertheless, the criterion Kierkegaard presents can be defended despite this difficulty. One might argue that clarity about the nature of a revelation would accompany a genuine revelation. Either God would not give a religiously confused individual a revelation, or else God would intervene in that person's consciousness to bring about the necessary clarity. Kierkegaard believes that people who have received a special revelation from God (prophets and apostles—these two categories are obviously different but Kierkegaard considers them together insofar as both make a claim to be the bearer of a special revelation that has authority) would have a consciousness of having received such a revelation and would have at least some consciousness of the special status this implies. Thus, a criterion of being a genuine prophet or apostle is a consciousness that one is a prophet or apostle and at least some degree of clarity about what that role entails. Obviously, this does not mean that all prophets and apostles understand themselves in precisely the same way; the calling of the apostle might be different from that of the prophet and even within these general categories there might be lots of individual differences. But this is compatible with the claim that all of them would have at least some consciousness of being authorized in some way to speak God's word.

If we assume that God is not a God of confusion, then this reply seems plausible, at least to me, though objections could certainly be raised and speculation about what God would and would not do is always a bit uncertain. Nevertheless this reply, if it is what Kierkegaard would say at this point, does require some modification, or at least nuancing, of his position. For his position seems to be that divine authorization is completely "other" and thus cannot be recognized from any human characteristics. One cannot reason from the fact that the Reverend Moon is a genius to the conclusion that the Reverend Moon is an apostle. But the reply I have put in Kierkegaard's mouth does imply that the genuine apostle will exhibit one recognizable human trait: clarity about religious concepts. We may not expect St. Paul to be a philosophical or literary genius, but we may at least expect him to be clear-headed about what it means to be an apostle. And if there is at least one recognizable trait an apostle displays, we might well ask whether or not there are other traits that we would expect an apostle to exhibit as well. If so, though we cannot and should not seek to abolish authority by believing the authority only when we have autonomously concluded the message delivered is true, we may legitimately inquire as to whether or not the authority is genuine. Insofar as such an inquiry relies on recognizable criteria, it will be at least partly rational, even if it cannot establish any conclusions with certainty.

## *2. Rejection of Power and Politics: Acceptance of Solitude and Failure*

A second criterion is also derived by Kierkegaard from the means the revelation-bearer uses to advance the claimed revelation. This criterion can be summed up in the claim that a person who has genuinely received a revelation will not use worldly means to ensure the triumph of the revelation, but will rest content in God's providence. This person will not manipulate or coerce others into accepting the revelation, and he or she does not fear

rejection, confident that the ultimate outcome is in God's hands.

This criterion is presented as early as *Fear and Trembling*, where Johannes de Silentio argues that the true "knight of faith," who has an individual relation to the absolute that shapes his life, can be distinguished from a counterfeit version by the appearance of "sectarianism" in the counterfeit. The "sectarian" attempts to assure himself that he is genuinely called by God by getting the approval of a group of human admirers, "a few good friends and comrades."<sup>16</sup> The genuine knight of faith has no need of such human confirmation, but "is a witness, never the teacher."<sup>17</sup>

A closely related theme is developed at more length in *The Book on Adler*, where it is maintained that the genuine apostle cannot use worldly means to ensure the success of his cause. Kierkegaard says that though it might be possible for an apostle to have "power in the worldly sense," so that he "had great influence and powerful connections, by which forces one is victorious over people's opinions and judgments," if he actually uses this power "he *eo ipso* would have forfeited his cause."<sup>18</sup> A genuine apostle must not define his cause in such a way that it can be confused with any human enterprise, but the spurious "man of movement" must have "the majority in order to obtain certainty" that he truly has had a revelation.<sup>19</sup>

This implies that the genuine apostle has a certain indifference to the success of his or her cause. The true extraordinary figure will "jest lightly about being victorious in the world, because he knows very well that if only everything is in order with his relation to God, his idea will surely succeed, even if he falls."<sup>20</sup> The genuine revelation recipient will exhibit no impatience, but will be content to allow God's timing to play itself out, content to suffer the loss of everything for the sake of the doctrine bequeathed to him.<sup>21</sup>

This second criterion raises the same kind of critical question as did the first criterion, since once more it seems we have a criterion by which to recognize a genuine bearer of a revelation, rather than a criterion of whether a revelation is genuine. Even if Kierkegaard is right about the proper stance of an apostle or other revelation claimant, it seems possible for someone who has had a genuine revelation to fail to display the appropriate stance by behaving in a worldly manner. The criterion would in that case rule out a genuine revelation.

However, it also seems possible to respond to this objection as in the first case, by hypothesizing that God would not grant to a worldly person a genuine revelation, or else that God would shape the life of the apostle in such a way that the person would not behave in a worldly manner. And this kind of hypothesis certainly has some plausibility; in fact it fits the traditional claim that genuine sanctity or holiness is one criterion of a true prophet.

One might object to this in two ways. First, one might argue that at least some Biblical prophets do not meet this criterion. Think for example of Deborah and some of the other judges, who are both prophets and temporal leaders, employing what Kierkegaard would term "worldly" instruments such as military force. In response to this, I think that Kierkegaard's concept of the "prophet" is strongly marked by his reading of the New Testament, where the model of the one who speaks for God is Jesus of Nazareth, who refuses to call legions of angels to rescue him from the cross and restrains his own followers from taking up the sword on his behalf. Nevertheless, the

kind of theme Kierkegaard is stressing is not absent from the Old Testament, even if it is not consistently exemplified there. Old Testament prophets also urge the people of God to put their trust in Yahweh rather than the horses and chariots of Pharaoh. The story of Gideon even exemplifies this theme in a story of a military engagement, since in the story God tells Gideon to send away most of his army, on the grounds that if the army is too large, people will think that Israel was rescued by ordinary military might rather than the power of God.<sup>22</sup>

The second objection is that one might think that Kierkegaard's concept of the worldly is too vague. Is "being worldly" to be contrasted with "being godly or spiritual" or is it to be equated with using ordinary forms of worldly power? Certainly, there are alternative concepts of what it means to be spiritual and worldly and on some of these, Kierkegaard's use of the "worldly" may look like equivocation. However, to him the worldly person is simply the person who is not rooted in faith, and a life that is not rooted in faith can manifest itself in worldliness in the sense of debauchery, but also in worldliness in the sense of being completely reliant on what we might call natural means of achieving results. This is not to say that a spiritual person in his sense does not employ natural means and live an ordinary life. It does mean that a truly spiritual person does not put ultimate trust in such natural means, particularly with respect to the achievement of spiritual ends. The transmission of a message from God would be a spiritual end *par excellence*, and so he thinks that deep faith and trust in God is a characteristic that one would expect to see in a true prophet, and such a faith is incompatible with the attitude of the person who relies on worldly power to achieve results.

I think that this criterion is a particularly valuable one in the contemporary world, since most if not all of the evils done by people who claim to have had a revelation from God seem to involve some kind of desire for worldly power or control, either over a small or large group. Like Enlightenment thinkers, I am leery of thinkers who have a truth they are willing to kill for. However, an alleged prophet who shows no desire to dominate or oppress others, but is willing to suffer oppression for the sake of the message seems quite different. Kierkegaard's sure grasp of this point is partly what lies behind his own later emphasis on the martyr as the genuine "witness to the truth."

But once more this implies that there are criteria for recognizing a genuine apostle or prophet, and applying those criteria would seem to be partly a matter of employing human reason, since recognition of someone as employing worldly means or craving social approval would seem to require only natural human capacities. Such criteria would be very far from allowing someone to determine the truth of a revelation claim with objective certainty. This is partly because the criteria are mostly negative in character and are in any case necessarily imprecise in their application. However, there is no reason to think that the application of such criteria would be unimportant.

### 3. *Paradoxicalness of the Revelation*

A third criterion offered in Kierkegaard's writings applies more directly to the revelation itself, rather than the person receiving the revelation. A

genuine revelation would be marked, he thinks, by paradoxicalness. In *The Book on Adler* the alleged apostle is also described as "paradoxical," but in this case the characteristic is also applicable to the revelation itself and perhaps is applied to the apostle insofar as he is related to the revelation. That the apostle is sent by God is a paradoxical fact, but the content of his message is essentially paradoxical as well.<sup>23</sup>

The nature of paradoxicalness is a huge and much-debated topic in Kierkegaard interpretation, but it is at least clear in this context that the paradoxicalness of a revelation is supposed to function as a criterion of its "transcendent" character. A merely human idea or theory, even one that originates with genius, always lies within what Kierkegaard calls "immanence." A genuine revelation retains the character of transcendence: "However long it is proclaimed in the world, it remains essentially just as new, just as paradoxical; no immanence can assimilate it."<sup>24</sup>

That paradoxicalness functions as a criterion of the genuineness of a revelation is obscured by Kierkegaard's emphasis on the tension between human reason and the paradoxical, perhaps explored most systematically by Johannes Climacus in *Philosophical Fragments*, who describes faith as directed at the "absolute paradox" that God entered time as a human being. Since human reason as it actually exists is seen as dominated by assumptions of autonomy and self-sufficiency, the contact between reason and a paradox is marked by a clash, and faith in the paradox is regularly described as involving a belief that is "against the understanding." However, we must remember that this clash is not a necessary one. It is true that it is natural for human reason to take offense at the paradox, but it is not necessary. It is also possible for reason and the paradox to be on good terms, in the happy passion of faith.<sup>25</sup>

The moral of the appendix to Chapter 3 of *Fragments* is that the offended consciousness is actually a kind of confirmation of the genuineness of the paradox. One should *expect* human reason to be offended by a genuine revelation from God. When reason objects that it cannot understand the paradox, the response of the paradox is simply "Of course you do not understand. The only problem is that you somehow think this is an objection, instead of recognizing that it is in fact one sign that we have a genuine revelation."<sup>26</sup>

What I think lies behind this is simply the recognition that a genuine revelation from God would be expected to contain truths that human reason could not discover on its own, and even truths that reason could not understand after they have been revealed. And here Kierkegaard's view is actually rather traditional. Thomas Aquinas, for example, claims that God proposes things to man "that surpass reason" because we only know God truly "when we believe him to be above everything that is possible for man to think about him."<sup>27</sup> One of the criteria Aquinas then offers for the genuineness of the Christian revelation is that it contains "truths that surpass every human intellect."<sup>28</sup> An alleged revelation that contained only what humans could discover for themselves might be thought superfluous at best. At the very least, both Kierkegaard and Aquinas seem to think that such a revelation would lack something that one would expect to find in a genuine revelation.

This emphasis on paradoxicalness is quite pervasive in Kierkegaard's writings. A good illustration is found in *Works of Love*, where Kierkegaard argues that the divine origin of the command to love one's neighbor as oneself can be seen from the fact that this command has a transcendent character. This command "turns the natural man's conceptions and ideas upside down."<sup>29</sup> It is not a command that "arose in any human being's heart" but "breaks forth with divine origination" precisely "at the boundary where human language halts and courage fails."<sup>30</sup> Kierkegaard argues that our familiarity with Christianity blinds us to its otherness: "Take a pagan who is not spoiled by having learned thoughtlessly to patter Christianity by rote or has not been spoiled by the delusion of being a Christian—and this commandment, 'You *shall* love,' will not only surprise him but will disturb him, will be an offense to him."<sup>31</sup>

This third criterion raises many difficult issues. What should we say about the idea that one mark of a true divine revelation will be a paradoxical character, in the sense that it will contain truths that will strike us as strange, disturbing, or even repellent? I think this criterion, like the first two, is genuinely useful, but it is far from giving us any kind of "method" for discerning a genuine revelation. It could be used to eliminate some potential revelation claims. It also gives us a reason not to reject new revelation claims too quickly, for the fact that we find them unappealing may actually be a sign of their genuineness. The problem of course is that merely being strange and unappealing would not seem to go very far in distinguishing a genuine revelation from cases like Heaven's Gate. It would seem that for this criterion to be genuinely useful, Kierkegaard would need to distinguish between the kind of absurdity that is a criterion of transcendence and more garden varieties of absurdity.

I believe that this is not impossible for Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard himself insists that "not every absurdity is the absurd or the paradox," and that one must make a distinction between the paradox and "nonsense."<sup>32</sup> We can make a start here by clearly distinguishing between a paradox and a formal logical contradiction, though many commentators have confused the two.<sup>33</sup> More progress can be made by exploring what might be termed the "fit" between an alleged revelation and the human condition, in which the revelation can be seen in some sense to answer the questions to which humans must seek answers. Such a fit would be far from proof, since there are many rival answers that might constitute answers to these questions. And such a criterion would not illegitimately introduce a philosophical judgment on the content of the revelation, since the "fitness" of the answers provided could be seen as in some sense part of the form of the revelation, that aspect of the revelation that makes it a genuine candidate, so to speak. Kierkegaard's authorship as a whole can be seen in part as an exploration of this kind of fit between Christian faith and the situation of existing human beings. For now, I must leave this topic as an important one for further work. I will note only that one must clearly be careful in how one goes about the project. The distinction cannot be made by any kind of appeal to existing criteria of rationality that are used to judge the *content* of the revelation without relinquishing the claim that a revelation must be accepted on the basis of authority and that such authority is vitiated by any appeal to existing rational standards.

*V. Miracles and Faith*

Kierkegaard's claim that a revelation must be accepted on the basis of authority and that this precludes any appeal to rational criteria seems to be in tension with his own attempt to provide criteria for recognizing a genuine revelation, or at least detecting a spurious one. He needs such criteria unless a commitment to a revelation is a kind of "criterionless radical choice" made for no reasons at all, a view that Kierkegaard clearly wishes to reject. His own ambivalence on this question can be seen in his claim that "an apostle has no other evidence than his own statement, and at most his willingness to suffer everything joyfully for the sake of that statement."<sup>34</sup> Here he seems to want to have it both ways, saying that the apostle has only his own assertion as evidence, but then adding that he has "at most" the evidence of his willingness to suffer for his cause, which is to appeal to evidence from the character of the life of the apostle, evidence that is certainly not identical with a mere claim on the part of the alleged apostle. I think what we should say here is that though Kierkegaard flirts with the possibility that the choice to accept a revelation cannot appeal to any criteria at all, the fact that he himself tries to specify criteria of authenticity that have at least some value in eliminating some candidates shows that this is not his considered view.

Kierkegaard's aversion to rational evaluation of revelation claims is based on analogies such as the following. If one obeys a king's orders only because the order is witty or profound, one is actually being disloyal to the king.<sup>35</sup> If a son obeys a father's orders only when those orders appear reasonable to the son, then the son does not really obey the father.<sup>36</sup> If a citizen obeys a police order only in cases where the order makes sense to the citizen, the citizen similarly is not in fact accepting the authority of the police, even if the citizen in fact behaves as someone would who is obeying the police command.<sup>37</sup> These analogies are only analogies, since Kierkegaard holds that human authority is always relative and transitory in nature, while divine authority is absolute.<sup>38</sup> This difference does not, however, prevent us from seeing something of the character of divine authority from looking at cases of legitimate human authority. The specific lesson drawn is that I cannot be said to obey God or trust God if I follow a divine command only in cases where I have independently discovered or certified the wisdom of the command.

However, even if we accept this point, a more careful look at these analogies shows that reason can be used here in two different ways, corresponding to a distinction between the source of the revelation and the content of the revelation. It is one thing to accept a father's commands only when the son or daughter has independently certified the wisdom of the commands. But what about the case when a command appears that claims to be from the father, but where this is not known with certainty? It appears that a careful investigation of the question as to whether or not an order is really an order from the father does not show any refusal to accept the father's authority. In fact, such an investigation could be demanded by true filial devotion, for one would not want to obey an imposter, but only the true father.

Such an investigation of the origin of the command would not necessarily have to take the form of an independent certification of the truth of the message that contains the command, for such a certification might be impossible even if it were desirable, and the devoted son or daughter will not require this kind of backing. Rather, the son or daughter wants some kind of certification, not of the content of the message, but of the fact that the message truly comes from the father. One might look for a signature, for example, or some peculiar trait that identifies the message as coming from the father. Such certification would not be objectively certain; signatures can be forged, for example. Nevertheless, it might be important to the child who is prepared to obey the father.

What might the analogous "signature" be in the case of a message from God? One traditional answer is that a genuine revelation would be accompanied by miracles. To quote Thomas Aquinas: "A visible action that can only be divine reveals an invisibly inspired teacher of truth."<sup>39</sup> Kierkegaard's own account differs most significantly from traditional Christian views precisely by ignoring or underplaying the role of such miracles. He certainly considers miracles but dismisses them as providing any help on the grounds that miracles give "no physical certainty" since a miracle is itself something accepted by faith.<sup>40</sup>

There are different reasons given here for dismissing miracles as providing much help in recognizing a revelation as genuine. Miracles may be inadequate because they do not provide evidence that gives "physical certainty," by which I think Kierkegaard probably means evidence that is empirical in character and compelling. The problem might be that the evidence for a miracle is not fully empirical, or the problem might be simply that the evidence fails to be compelling, and therefore fails to provide objective certainty. (Obviously, one reason it might fail to be compelling for some people is by failing to be completely empirical in nature.) Yet another reason, which may or may not be distinct from these first two, is that a miracle cannot provide a basis for faith because it itself requires faith. However, none of these reasons seems adequate to me for completely rejecting the value of miracles in the discernment of a revelation.

We might first focus on the notion of "physical certainty." It is not completely clear what this might be, but we might take him to be speaking of a kind of certainty analogous to that obtained by the kind of scientific experiment in which a causal agent is directly observed. It is clear that miracles do not offer this kind of certainty. The evidence provided by a miracle seems far removed from that of a scientific experiment for several reasons. The case of the miracle, by hypothesis, will not be repeatable, and in calling an event a miracle one necessarily refers to God or some other supernatural agent who cannot be directly observed. (Though it should be noted that the contrast is not as sharp as it might appear, since many scientific entities are theoretical and unobservable.) Non-miraculous explanations will always be possible, and hence the assurance provided neither seems purely sensible or empirical. Nor does it appear to be certain in any objective sense. However, why should one expect that reasons for accepting a revelation as genuine would have to meet such criteria? Evidence that is not completely empirical and is less than objectively certain could still be important as evidence.

Nor does the fact that faith is required to discern a miracle necessarily mean that the miracle is unimportant. In Kierkegaard's language, faith is a passion that transforms a person and gives that person an ability to see the world differently. A person of faith thus might have skills that others lack. The idea that there are certain kinds of evidence that cannot be discerned if an individual lacks certain skills or capacities is not at all strange; there are many analogies in science and ordinary life. It may be true both that faith is required to discern a miracle and yet also true that the miracle could be important in strengthening and confirming faith. (Of course the person of faith could be transformed by the miracle so that the faith required to recognize the miracle is not precisely the same as the faith that is present after the miracle has been recognized.) In this case the miracle would not constitute evidence if by "evidence" we mean data that would be obvious to anyone, but the failure of Enlightenment epistemology shows how unrealistic such a concept of evidence is. I conclude that there is no good reason why Kierkegaard should not recognize the legitimacy of his own practice in giving criteria for the genuineness of a revelation, and no good reason why he should not extend the criteria he himself gives, notably by adding the criterion of miracles as signs of the divine origin of a revelation.

#### VI. *Externalism and Non-Evidential Accounts of Belief in Authority*

If Kierkegaard rejects the "existentialist" theory of radical choice as an explanation of how a religious authority is accepted, one may still ask how he thinks the commitment to an authority is made. Specifically, why does evidence play so little role in his account? Perhaps Kierkegaard is uninterested in the kind of evidence miracles might provide because of what might be termed the problem of the incommensurability between faith commitment and intellectual evidence, a problem discussed at length by his pseudonym Johannes Climacus in Part I of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Even if there is evidence that supports the claims of a religious authority, there is a gap between the certainty provided by that evidence and the kind of total commitment demanded by someone who claims to speak on behalf of God.

Perhaps it is for this reason that John Calvin and other Reformed theologians have rejected the idea that an acceptance of Biblical authority could be based on arguments or evidence, in favor of the idea that a commitment to Biblical authority is rooted directly in what they term "the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit."<sup>41</sup> This idea is often interpreted in an evidential manner as an appeal to an unverifiable inner experience, a kind of inferior, subjective evidence. However, there are good reasons to think that Calvin is not here talking about evidence at all, in the sense of appealing to any propositional fact that is to serve as the basis of some process of inference. Rather, he may be taken as claiming that belief in the authority is epistemologically basic, in much the same way as ordinary perceptual beliefs are claimed to be basic. The witness of the Spirit is a theological explanation of how the belief is produced, not a description of evidence to which the believer must appeal.<sup>42</sup> If Calvin's views here are interpreted in accordance with an externalist epistemology, the fact that the beliefs are not based on



evidence does not disqualify them as knowledge, since on such an epistemology, beliefs produced by a reliable process or faculty may qualify as knowledge.<sup>43</sup>

There are some respects in which Calvin's account seems similar to views found in Kierkegaard's writings. In *Philosophical Fragments*, faith (which clearly includes belief in the divine authority of the object of faith) is said to be a gift of God which results from a first-hand awareness of God in time. There is no explicit discussion of the internal witness of the Spirit here, but there is a claim that faith results from some kind of direct interaction between the individual and God, and one could view Calvin's account as simply an attempt to describe the nature of this interaction in more specifically Trinitarian terms. The thrust of the discussion in *Fragments* is that objective evidence is unimportant, if by "evidence" one means to refer to that which can be known in a "neutral" or "objective" manner. Rather, in the appearance of the God in time, we have a reality that can only be known when the person is gripped by the passion of faith, which is directly created by God. So Calvin and Kierkegaard would agree that little can be known about God "objectively" (though they would I think also agree that what can be known about God is objectively true).

However, although an externalist epistemology may make evidence unnecessary, it is not clear to me that such a position rules out any role for evidence. How exactly are we to think of evidence here? If evidence is taken as providing conclusive support for a commitment, support which is supposed to be recognizable by anyone, then it does seem that such evidence for religious authority will be insufficient to ground a commitment. However, such a concept of evidence seems rooted in Enlightenment epistemology, which attempts to show how human knowledge can be built on a foundation of objective certainty. A more chastened epistemology will recognize that almost no significant human knowledge is rooted in such evidence. Such an epistemology will be open to the possibility that there might be evidence that can only be discerned or appreciated from a particular perspective. Recently, William Wainwright has argued in *Reason and the Heart* for the possibility that faith might be based on evidence, but that the evidence might be such that a particular form of subjectivity is necessary to grasp the evidence, and illustrated this perspective by a look at Jonathan Edwards, John Henry Newman, and William James.<sup>44</sup> However, the fact that the evidence may not be generally available does not entail that it is not important for the individual who sees the evidence as evidence, nor that the evidence does not play a key role for that individual. To use Calvin's language, one way that the witness of the Spirit might be carried out would be by the Spirit drawing the attention of the individual to evidence and enabling the individual rightly to interpret and assess that evidence. If this is right, then it seems that Kierkegaard's claim that miracles require faith themselves does not rule out a search for criteria for genuine religious authority, and in particular, considering the traditional function of miracles as providing one such criterion.

I am not here claiming that either Kierkegaard or Calvin should be considered evidentialists, even Wainwright-type evidentialists. Kierkegaard in particular seems positively allergic to evidentialist apologetic arguments.

Rather, the claim is that non-evidentialist accounts such as theirs can consistently allow evidence a valuable and helpful role in making sense of religious beliefs, particularly beliefs grounded in authoritative revelation claims.

## VII. *Conclusions: Particularism and Universalism*

As I noted at the beginning, the Enlightenment has a certain suspicion of the idea of an authoritative revelation. Of course the category is not rejected outright, and some thinkers are more hospitable to revelation than others. Even Kant, the quintessential Enlightenment thinker, says that "no one can deny the *possibility* that a scripture, which, in practical content, contains much that is godly, may (with respect to what is historical in it) be regarded as a genuinely divine revelation."<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, though Kant allows for the possibility of a divine revelation, he thinks that one ought to think of such a revelation as a vehicle for the introduction and transmission of "pure moral faith," which depends on practical reason alone. "[R]ecognition and respect must be accorded, in Christian dogmatic, to universal human reason as the supremely commanding principle in a natural religion, and the revealed doctrine, upon which a church is founded . . . must be cherished and cultivated as merely a means, but a most precious means, of making this doctrine comprehensible, . . ."<sup>46</sup> The pure religion of reason may first have become known to humans through an historical revelation, but eventually the truths contained in that religion can be based on reason: "Hence a revelation . . . at a given time and in a given place might well be wise and very advantageous to the human race, in that, when once the religion thus introduced is here, and has been made known publicly, everyone can henceforth by himself and with his own reason convince himself of its truth."<sup>47</sup>

This kind of Enlightenment view, which can be seen even more clearly in Lessing, is committed to epistemological universalism, the idea that truth should ideally be accessible to everyone. This kind of position eschews all particularities, and simply leaves no room for a determinate revelation whose content cannot be assessed by universal criteria. Postmodernism has rejected the epistemologies of the Enlightenment but remains hostile to the notion of an authoritative revelation. However, if postmodernism is really to take particularism seriously, it ought to begin to consider the notion that a person could be defined by a commitment to a revelation that cannot be justified by Enlightenment standards.

Another way of making this point is by reflection on what Roderick Chisholm has called "the problem of the criterion."<sup>48</sup> In attempting to develop criteria for knowledge, it would be nice to develop criteria whose validity could be recognized independently of any actual knowledge claims. Such criteria could then provide a secure foundation for knowledge claims. However, Chisholm argues that this is impossible. The proper way to proceed in epistemology is to begin with examples of what we actually know and then to reflect on those examples, so as to see if criteria can be developed to account for what we know. The criteria, obviously, are dependent on our willingness to commit ourselves to certain items of knowledge.

In a similar manner, we would like to have criteria for genuine religious authority that could be developed antecedently to accepting any such authority, so as to provide a justification for such acceptance. However, it may be that this is impossible. We can no more hope to develop criteria for religious authority without accepting some actual examples than we could hope to develop criteria for recognizing works of art without reflecting on works of art that are already accepted as works of art. The status of some of these accepted works may of course be challenged and revised after reflection, but no progress can be made without some commitment to what is to count as art.

The individual who is seeking religious truth does not see the world *sub specie aeternitatis* but stands at a particular historical spot. The "spots" where people stand may well be partially shaped by their faith commitments, but that does not preclude a concern for truth. I conclude that there is no contradiction between Kierkegaard's thesis that a revelation claim must be accepted on the basis of the authority of the revelation and his own attempt to develop criteria for discerning a genuine authority. Rather, his own criteria should be further developed and additional criteria, such as the accompaniment of a revelation by miracles, should be developed as well. Such criteria can never provide objective certainty; they are neither absolutely certain nor discernible independently of the individual's subjective commitments. They do not provide a secure foundation in the Enlightenment sense, and they do not eliminate the dangers inherent in any commitment to authority. However, this does not mean that these rational criteria are not important. Such criteria may help a person make sense of a commitment that is not an arbitrary "criterionless radical choice."

The picture of the person as being required to justify a commitment to religious authority from some kind of neutral standpoint must be rejected. Kierkegaard and Calvin are right to argue for the possibility that an encounter with a revelation may itself transform the individual in such a way that the truth of the revelation becomes evident to the person. However, there is no reason to rule out the possibility that this transformation might involve the use of rational criteria.

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#### NOTES

1. John Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 182.
2. Caputo, p. 195.
3. Caputo, p. 272.
4. Caputo, p. 272.
5. Caputo, p. 282.
6. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 5.
7. See, for example, the embarrassing introduction by Frederick Sontag to the Harper Torchbook edition of the Lowrie translation of *The Book on Adler*,

published under the title *On Authority and Revelation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966). Sontag clearly cannot quite understand how the author who has written so much about doubt, subjectivity, and the individual can be so committed to the concept of religious authority.

8. See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 79.

9. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 31.

10. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 21.

11. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 194. Oddly enough, Climacus attaches a footnote to this claim in which he essentially retracts it by arguing that subjective lunacy can be distinguished from subjective truth by the fact that subjective lunacy embraces a finite idea with an inappropriate kind of passion.

12. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 196.

13. For the full story, see the Hong's historical introduction in their translation of *The Book on Adler*.

14. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, p. 177.

15. See for example the classical discussion of faith offered by Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae*, where faith is described as believing what God has revealed because God has revealed it. This faith is also described as "believing for the sake of God" since its motivation is the achievement of that vision of God that is the final end for humans. See *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Mark D. Jordan (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 2-2, 2 A. 1 (pp. 65-68); 2-2, 2, 2 (pp. 69-70); 2-2, 3, A. 1 (pp. 95-96).

16. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 79.

17. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 80.

18. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, p. 186.

19. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, p. 160.

20. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, p. 157.

21. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, pp. 166-167, 186.

22. See *Judges* 7:1-8.

23. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, p. 187.

24. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, p. 176.

25. Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 48.

26. I am loosely paraphrasing Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 52.

27. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* ed. and trans. by Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), p. 70.

28. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, p. 72.

29. Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 24.

30. The allusion is to *I Corinthians* 2:9, where Paul quotes *Isaiah* 64:4. See Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, p. 24.

31. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, p. 25.

32. The former quotation is from Søren Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1967), Vol I. entry 7, p. 4. The latter is from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 504.

33. For arguments that Kierkegaard's concept of paradox, even the "absolute paradox," must be distinguished from a formal, logical contradiction, see my *Passionate Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), Chapter 7. More recently, Merold Westphal has made similar arguments in

*Becoming a Self: A Reading of Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1996), Chapter 12.

34. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, p. 186.

35. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, pp. 178, 186.

36. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, p. 185.

37. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, p. 180, where it is said that "whether a police officer, for example, is a scoundrel or an upright man, as soon as he is on duty, he has authority." Someone who obeys a "government department" if it produces "witticisms" is "making a fool of the department" (p. 182).

38. See for example Kierkegaard's claim that while as a subject "I am to honor and obey the king," it is permissible for me to be "built up religiously" with the thought that "essentially I am a citizen of heaven," and as part of that kingdom I am equal with his majesty. *The Book on Adler*, pp. 180-181.

39. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, p. 73.

40. Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, p. 178.

41. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), VII, 4-5 (pp. 78-81).

42. See my discussion of Calvin's account in Chapter 9 of my *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

43. For a well-known example of such an externalist epistemology, see Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

44. See William J. Wainwright, *Reason and the Heart: A Prolegomenon to a Critique of Passional Reason* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995).

45. Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within The Limits of Reason Alone*, ed. and trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 122-123.

46. Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, pp. 152-153.

47. Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, p. 144.

48. For a good introduction to Chisholm's thinking on this topic, see "The Problem of the Criterion," Chapter 5 in his book *The Foundations of Knowing* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1982).